

DLC Reaches Agreement with DESE and Holyoke Public Schools Concerning Abuse It Found at the Therapeutic Intervention Program at the Peck School in Holyoke

BOSTON, February 3, 2016 – Following up on the Disability Law Center’s December report which found a disturbing pattern of excessive physical restraint and psychological abuse of students with disabilities at the Therapeutic Intervention Program (TIP) at the Peck School in Holyoke, DLC reached an agreement with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Holyoke Public Schools (HPS).

The agreement sets forth the roles and responsibilities of DLC, DESE and HPS to work together to improve conditions at the Peck School and the TIP program within that school. Specifically the agreement provides that:

- DESE and HPS will share the results of their own investigation into concerns at the Peck school, describe what efforts have been taken to address the concerns at the school, and describe in detail what steps will be taken to address concerns at Peck;
- Those remedial steps will include the following:
 - o efforts to reduce restraint and seclusion;
 - o planned trainings and de-escalation techniques;
 - o revising policies and establishing new protocols on restraint and seclusion;
 - o revising policies and establishing new protocols for involving the police versus mental health interventions; and
 - o improvements to the physical building to provide a safe learning environment for the students.
- Over the next year, DESE and HPS will provide periodic data reports to DLC to track the effectiveness of the remedial plan; and
- Over the next year, DLC will conduct on site monitoring visits to TIP at the Peck School.

“We commend the willingness of DESE and HPS to enter into an agreement that sets a clear framework for the parties to work together to cure the problems found at this school for youngsters with disabilities. We look forward to a strong partnership to ensure that these students are treated appropriately and receive the critically important services to which they are entitled,” said Christine Griffin, Executive Director of the Disability Law Center.

“I welcome this partnership with the Disability Law Center,” said Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Mitchell D. Chester. “Holyoke’s Therapeutic Intervention Program needs to get it right for its students, who are some of our most vulnerable children. I believe DLC’s monitoring will help ensure that the program becomes a supportive place for students to learn.”

DLC, an independent private non-profit organization, is the Protection and Advocacy System for Massachusetts, is empowered under federal law with investigating and stopping abuse or neglect of youngsters and adults with disabilities in Massachusetts.

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